

Kiwanis Club honors MLC's Fritz for service

By Brett Ellis
Fremont Tribune

The Fremont Kiwanis Club took time on Thursday to offer its thanks to Stephen Fritz for his dedication to serving the community.

Fritz, in turn, thanked the community for making him feel at home.

Fritz, who has served as interim president at Midland

Lutheran College since April 2007, will be replaced by Ben Sasse at the end of March.

"You have welcomed us and you have embraced us," Fritz said of he and his wife, Pat. "You have made us part of the community and we thank you for that."

Fritz was scheduled the weekly speaker, but was caught off guard by the club's recognition.

Fritz was presented with a Kiwanis Legion of Honor pin for 25 years of service in the organization and also received a Kiwanis hat.

"We as a community of Kiwanians and a community of Fremont would like to thank you for all that you have done here," Fremont Kiwanis president Jim Holtam said.

Fritz said he will remain in Fremont at least through the

end of the academic year and does not know where he will go next.

He took time to praise the Kiwanis members and those who belong to other service organizations in town.

"I truly believe our community is only as good as the people that are willing to volunteer and serve," Fritz said.



Vern Gibson shakes hands with outgoing Midland Lutheran College President Stephen Fritz following Kiwanis Club Thursday at the Clarion Inn.

Chris Bristol, Fremont Tribune



From immigrants to businessmen

Two downtown Fremont business owners — one is a third-generation citizen whose roots can be traced back to Germany; the other a first-generation citizen from Mexico — have lived the American dream.

One who owns a clothing store that has been in the family since 1883; the other who owns a grocery store.

Both men and their families came to the United States where there were fewer restrictions and greater opportunities to work and own their own businesses.



Photos by Dean Jacobs, Fremont Tribune

Bob Missel's great-grandfather was born in Germany and traveled to the United States when he was just 13 years old.

He carries on family tradition, business

Bob Missel: Germany 1885

Bob Missel is chairman of the Dodge County Board of Supervisors and in 1984 became owner of his family's business, Sampter's in downtown Fremont.

The clothing store was established by his great-grandfather, Nathan Sampter, in 1895.

Missel is proud of his family's German heritage and their many contributions to Fremont.

His great-grandfather was born in Pasen, Germany, in 1853 and at the age 13, unaccompanied by relatives or friends, crossed the ocean to seek a life in a land where there were fewer restrictions. He arrived in New York City with \$3 in his pocket.

After a few days in New York City, he traveled to Peoria, Ill., where he had an uncle. He worked for this uncle in a clothing store, learning the business and opened his first clothing business in Savanna, Ill., later moving it to Independence, Iowa.

In 1885, he moved to Fremont and opened Sampter's. He was a successful businessman and became one of the builders of the Union Block in the heart of the business section. He moved his store to the Union Block building in 1890.

He was known as an industrious, thrifty and a wise manager and accumulated a fair



Courtesy

Nathan Sampter traveled to the U.S. when he was just 13 years old. He moved to Fremont in 1885.

share of this world's goods, his business having been extensive and lucrative. He was also known to promote Fremont's business interests and contribute regularly to charities.

In 1887, Nathan married Carrie Myers, whose father also was a German immigrant. He was a previous clothing store owner in Independence and became a judge in Omaha. Nathan and Carrie Sampter had three children.

Nathan's son, Gerald Sampter, was born in Fremont and renamed the store Gerald Sampter Clothier in 1925. Gerald was also a successful businessman who served the community in many ways.

U.S., hard work allowed his 'dreams to come true'

Alfredo Velez: Mexico 1985

Alfredo Velez, was born in Mexico to the family of a great estate with mountains, trees and cattle as far as one can see near the city of Chichihualco.

This land was settled by his great-grandfather, Joaquin Velez, who was born in Spain. In the 1860s, his great-grandfather served as a soldier for the King of Spain and was sent to Mexico in the same way that the King of England sent colonists to the United States.

His great-grandfather developed the land which remained in the family for more than 100 years. However, in the 1970s the Mexican government took the land, without providing any compensation to the Velez family, and gave it to the people living in the area to plant corn and beans.

It was in 1976 that Velez came to the United States. One of four brothers, Velez's father was very strict and as a Mormon believed that school was important. His father sent all four brothers to the Mormon School in Mexico City. His brothers continued with school, but Velez wanted to get a job and work. He believed there was greater opportunity in the United States.

In 1980, he moved to North Platte, married and had a daughter. His wife taught him how to read and speak English. He returned to Mexico after getting a divorce. A few years later he met and married Rocio Velez and moved back to the United States, becoming a citizen in 1985. He began to work in meatpacking plants. He worked and saved his money. In 1998, he had saved enough money to buy a business — Tienda Mexicana Guerrero in downtown Fremont.

"I work very hard every day of the week, 13 hours a day," he said.

As a business owner, Velez believes hard work and living in the United States has allowed his "dreams to come true."

Like his father, he wanted his children to get a good education.

His son received two awards from Nebraska Wesleyan University, one for academic achievement and one as a four-year letter winner in soccer. A graduate of Fremont High and Nebraska Wesleyan, his son is now working on a master's degree and plans to become a chiropractor. His daughter is studying international business at Nebraska Wesleyan. All the children love soccer as a recent newspaper article and picture of his younger daughter reveals.

He and his wife now have four children, three girls and a boy. Adorning his office are plaques and newspaper articles highlighting his children's academic and athletic skills.

"I love the United States," he said. "It has given me a lot; it has given me opportunities to work hard so that I could give my children a good education. All Hispanics in the United States want to contribute to the U.S. to keep this a great country. We are so proud to be here."

"I tell other Hispanic people to be good citizens and not to do anything that harms. Let some of the people say that we are 'bad people.' We are good people. We work hard. We are respectful and responsible neighbors and contribute with our taxes. We need to help all the people to have a better life."



Alfredo Velez owns a grocery store in Fremont. He became a U.S. citizen in 1985.

Team holds fundraiser

The Saunders County National Cancer Society and Relay for Life Crusher Team is sponsoring a fundraiser featuring Elvis impersonator Joseph Hall. The show will take place from 7-9 p.m. Feb. 27 at Starlite Ballroom, west of Wahoo.

Tickets are \$20 and may be purchased in advance by contacting Kyle at (402) 617-4477. Doors will open at 5 p.m. and lunch will be served. Luminaries will be sold for this summer's Relay for Life event.

Hall began performing in Lincoln at age 22. He has performed all over the United States and in Europe. Currently, he is performing at the Owen Theater in Branson, Mo.

Hall placed in the top 10 on "America's Got Talent" in 2008 and has been a top 10 Elvis tribute artist at Graceland the past three years.

POLICE BEAT

Police probe burglary

Tribune staff

Fremont Police are investigating a burglary to Gringo's.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said the burglary to the restaurant at 1950 N. Bell St. was reported Thursday morning and took place sometime after 11 Wednesday night.

Elliott said there was forced entry to the restaurant, and alcohol and cash were stolen. A sliding window also was damaged.

The loss was estimated at \$1,900, Elliott said.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

Window broken out

Tribune staff

Fremont Police are investigating a Thursday morning report of damage to a vehicle.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said the driver's-side window was broken out of the vehicle in the 1600 block of North D Street. The loss was estimated at \$200.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

Police look into vandalism

Tribune staff

Fremont Police are investigating a Wednesday afternoon report of spray paint to a building under construction.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said spray paint was found on the inside walls of the Menards building in the 3600 block of East 24th Street.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

1885: Bob Missel's great-grandfather, Nathan Sampter, moves to Fremont.

1985: Alfredo Velez of Mexico moves to Fremont after buying grocery store.

1856 1870 1890 1910 1930 1950 1970 1990 2010

Periods of large immigrant arrivals throughout Fremont's history. ■ 1856-1890: Mostly northern Europeans; ■ 1900-1920: Mostly southern Europeans; ■ 1990-present: Mostly Latin American, Asians, Europeans.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

"Building Fremont: Immigrants 1856 to present" is a special four-week project of the Fremont Tribune, Fremont Area Art Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 22 and Nebraska Is Home Fremont. It features photography by Dean Jacobs. Personal stories were compiled by Nebraska Is Home Fremont.